

# DIVERSITY MATTERS

DIRECTOR OF DIVERSITY

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## *To our readers:*

After an explosive start in 2006, we continued to make steady progress this year with our diversity initiative. Recruiting highlights include the most diverse summer associate class in the firm's history, with one-third from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. At least seven members of the class will be returning next year as second-year summer associates or associates in the fall. Additionally, with eight minority attorneys joining the firm this year, there are now 34 attorneys of color representing 8.5% of all attorneys, compared to 29 (or 7.7%) at the end of 2006. Even more significantly, the number of minorities at the partnership level has nearly doubled in the last two years. Female representation remains strong at the firm, particularly at the associate level, which now stands at over 57%, compared to less than 53% a year ago.

I am also pleased to report that the level of participation in diversity events this year has easily surpassed last year's in terms of number of events and financial sponsorship. Most significantly, we had a far greater number of attorneys attending, organizing and speaking at these events than in the previous year. Both the level and nature of our participation reflect our growing awareness and commitment.

Amid these successes, challenges remain with retention and advancement of a diverse workforce, which will be our priority for next year. We lost several minority attorneys this year, and the female representation in the partnership ranks has stalled at around 22% since the '80s. A key component of our retention and advancement strategy will focus on increasing communication and dialogue both internally and externally to broaden our awareness and engagement.

To guide us through the next phase of our diversity initiative, we have articulated the mission of our commitment to diversity and inclusion as follows:

### **KUTAK ROCK LLP DIVERSITY STATEMENT**

*At Kutak Rock LLP, we strive to be a leader in promoting workplace diversity and inclusion. Our long-standing commitment to diversity reflects our mission:*

*To ensure that access and opportunities for professional growth are available to all qualified individuals without bias or barriers based on, among other things, gender, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, culture, sexual orientation, religion, physical ability, marital or parental status, age, economic background and life experiences.*

*To recruit, hire, train, promote and retain qualified individuals from diverse backgrounds and with diverse perspectives.*

*To respect and nurture the diverse perspectives and skills of our workforce to deliver innovation and excellence to our clients and communities.*

*To reflect at all levels of our workforce the diversity of our clients, the United States of America and communities in which we serve.*

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*Daphne Hyun-Jin Aronson*  
Director of Diversity

# Diversity Dialogue: David Jacobson

At Kutak Rock LLP, we support and take pride in the level of diversity, commitment and dedication of many of our lawyers and staff. At the core of the culture of diversity and inclusion is open dialogue and sharing of ideas. With that in mind, I am pleased to introduce a new column featuring interviews with members of the firm on the topic of diversity.

We begin with our Chairman, David Jacobson, who led the firm-wide initiative to revitalize diversity efforts a few years ago. Mr. Jacobson's commitment to diversity has deep roots. While at law school, he clerked at the Omaha Legal Aid Society and worked on a desegregation case against the Omaha School District. Immediately following graduation, he worked as a Legal Aid staff attorney for two and a half years before joining Kutak Rock LLP.

For more than 10 years, Mr. Jacobson has been a board member of All Our Kids, which provides mentoring to at-risk youth, most of whom are minorities, beginning at sixth grade, and funding for college education. He is also a co-founder and member of the Black/Jewish Dialogue in Omaha, which was created to promote understanding between these groups through frank discussion. More recently, he has served on the steering committee for Building Bright Futures, a private effort launched in early 2007 to extend education opportunities to disadvantaged children in Omaha, including providing college scholarships to every low-income high school graduate in Douglas and Sarpy Counties. Earlier this year, Mr. Jacobson was also appointed to the board of the African-American Achievement Council in Omaha, which was established in 1998 to improve academic performance of children of African heritage.



**Mr. Jacobson**

**Diversity Matters:** You have been involved in diversity efforts for decades both in and outside the firm. What does diversity mean to you, and why is it important to you?

**Jacobson:** I firmly believe that diversity enriches one's life. I was lucky to have been exposed to diversity at Central High School in Omaha. That experience opened my eyes and mind to the power of diversity in our society and community where different perspectives and experiences can come together and be shared. In addition to this social significance, there is now an undeniable business case for diversity given the shift in the demographic composition of our clients and their businesses.

**Diversity Matters:** What would you like to share about the culture at Kutak Rock LLP with regard to diversity, how it has evolved and where we are today?

**Jacobson:** Bob Kutak and his co-founding partners were true visionaries who believed in hiring and nurturing the best talent without artificial bias or barriers. In the early 70s, we were one of the first national law firms to start hiring female attorneys and introduced flexible work schedules. From early on, we were proactively recruiting minority attorneys and received numerous recognition for our leadership, including the Pledge to Diversity award from the Midlands Bar Association in 1995. While the next generation of our attorneys quite simply stepped into this culture, many law firms around the country started to aggressively implement structured programs with a sense of urgency and intention.

**Diversity Matters:** What can we do better?

**Jacobson:** All along, the firm has had the right instincts, and we have the benefit of having the long-standing culture of open arms. But we cannot rest on our history or culture, but need to be more proactive in creating a workplace environment today that is conducive to women and minorities succeeding in reaching their full potential here.

**Diversity Matters:** In terms of diversity, the legal profession lags substantially behind other professions, such as engineers, physicians and accountants. Why do you think that is the case?

**Jacobson:** I think there are pipeline challenges that have not been adequately addressed. If you look at law school enrollment in the past 20 years, the minority enrollment is up but has not kept pace with the demographic shift in our society, and there are now troubling signs of decreasing enrollment in a number of minority groups. Given the recent studies that show a widening gap in academic achievement for many of the minority groups starting in elementary school, pipeline initiatives are crucial, and the legal professionals should take the ownership of providing inspiration to the next generation of attorneys.

## Diversity Event Highlights

As noted previously, we have easily exceeded the number of events attended and sponsored by the firm and its attorneys compared to each of the last two years. Moreover, our attorneys are increasingly taking leadership roles in organizing a number of these events. I am delighted to share some of the highlights for the second half of 2007:

- In July, the firm again participated in the Hispanic National Bar Foundation (“HNBF”) Future Latino Leaders Law Camp. This year also marked the inaugural HNBF awards dinner, at which the firm sponsored a table. The Kutak Rock LLP attendees included **Barry Steinberg, Gil Boyce, Jennifer Blunt, Christina Adams, Daphne Aronson** and **Mike Sillyman**, who, as Secretary of HNBF, had a special presentation at the dinner. Mike also attended the Hispanic National Bar Association Annual Convention held in Puerto Rico on October 3-7.
- In September, the firm returned to the Heartland Diversity Legal Job Fair in Kansas City, the Rocky Mountain Legal Diversity Summit and Career Fair in Denver and the annual Nebraska Legal Diversity Summit in Omaha. The firm was also a sponsor at the Rocky Mountain Legal Diversity Summit.
- On October 17, **Daphne Aronson** participated on the diversity panel at the Diversity Seminar sponsored by the Nebraska State Bar Leadership Academy.
- The firm again sponsored the Atlanta Women’s Foundation and attended their annual “Numbers Too Big to Ignore” luncheon on October 25. The attendees included **Elizabeth Davis, Ruth Ellen Isaac, Joyce Mocek, Debbie Ruskin, Katherine Bailey, Sisera Dowdy, Erin Elliott** and **Susan Stebbins**.
- On November 2, the Arizona Women Lawyers Association (“AWLA”) held its 28th annual convention, which was hosted jointly by the National Association of Women Lawyers this year. The firm was a major event sponsor this year, and **Paige Martin** took office as President of AWLA at the convention. Many of our attorneys attended the conference, including **Kathy Carey, Antoinette Hewitt** and **Sybil Renick** from Irvine, and **Susan Klemmer, Natalie Anderson, Franci Fealk, Emily Smith, Vanessa Brown, Nicole Perrault** and **Jo Ana Saint George** from Scottsdale. **Marc Lieberman** and **Andrew Russell** also attended the reception. Thanks to all for their enthusiastic support!
- On November 8-9, **Jill Goldstein** and **Beth Jensen** attended the ABA Women in Law Leadership Academy in Chicago.
- **Loc Pfeiffer** attended the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (“NAPABA”) Annual Convention in Las Vegas on November 15-18. Loc was recently appointed to the board of directors of the Virginia Chapter of NAPABA.
- On November 27, the firm hosted a dinner for the Omaha Inns of Court Diversity Program. **Jeremy Fitzpatrick** is currently the president of the Omaha Inns, and **Jay Jolley** and **Heather Anschutz** are members. The program featured a discussion about diversity in the Omaha bar, including a video presentation of interviews of various diversity leaders in Omaha.



Ms. Martin taking office as President of the Arizona Women Lawyers Association.

## Attorneys in the News

### Banks and Cung Selected as “Super Lawyers” in Missouri and Arkansas

Congratulations to **Eric Banks** and **Niki Cung**, who have been selected as 2007 “Super Lawyers” in Missouri and Arkansas, respectively. They join **Loc Pfeiffer**, who was selected as a Virginia “Super Lawyer” earlier this year. Super Lawyers are selected through nominations from other lawyers and peer group evaluations.

In addition, Niki was a special presenter on diversity at the orientation for the 2010 incoming class at the University of Arkansas School of Law.

### Boyce Presents Seminar on Internal Investigations

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On June 13, **Gil Boyce** was a presenter on internal investigations at a seminar attended by approximately 30 in-house counsels in Arkansas. Earlier this year, Gil had also presented on this topic covering the nuts and bolts of how to conduct internal investigations and potential ethical issues at the annual National Bar Association Commercial Law Section Corporate Counsel Conference in Miami, Florida.

### Galdean Appointed to the Board of Directors of Wichita Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

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In August, **Trinidad Galdean** was appointed to a three-year term on the Board of Directors of the Wichita Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, which focuses on the creation and development of economic opportunities within the Hispanic business community in Kansas.

After assisting the Kansas Hispanic Education & Development Foundation with the formation, Trinidad was appointed to their Board of Directors as Secretary and designated as one of the founding members this past October. This new organization is devoted to enhancing Hispanic community leadership and professional development in the State of Kansas.

### Probasco Selected to Participate in the National Stakeholder 100 Program

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Stakeholder 100 is an exciting new program that was launched nationally earlier this year. The goal of Stakeholder 100 is to help select and train the top 100 law firm associates of color in the United States. The selection committee is comprised of 40 in-house counsel members, including 15 general counsels, who have agreed to provide continuous training of and investment in the selected associates and their law firms.

**Angela Probasco** is a litigation associate in Omaha who joined the firm last year. Angela has also been actively involved in community service since law school, during which time she served as an instructor for the Asian LEAD Academy and as Vice President of the Asian Law Students Association. This fall, Angela and another litigation associate from the Omaha office, **Janice Holmes**, teamed up to volunteer as mock trial coaches at a local high school in the North Omaha area through the Nebraska State Bar Foundation. Their team won the first round! They almost won the second round as well, even though they went up against last year's championship team.

## Around the Firm:

Congratulations to the Women Attorneys' Book Group in **Atlanta**, which crossed a two-year mark since its inception in the fall of 2005. All the female attorneys from the Atlanta office, along with **Karen Thompson** from Richmond, have been meeting on the first Monday of each month to discuss a book related to business law. They cover six books a year in hour long brown bag lunch discussions, which have provided a comfortable forum for the female partners and associates to communicate and network.

The Diverse Attorney group in **Omaha** is also celebrating a two-year milestone of their monthly meetings. Started as an informal support group, the group hosted two special sessions this year: a diversity luncheon for summer associates and minority professional staff at the Omaha office, and a special presentation by our INROADS prelaw intern, Shakilah Hill. Shakilah is a senior at Creighton University and is taking the LSAT this December. The firm, in conjunction with INROADS, gave Shakilah a special scholarship to pay for her Kaplan LSAT tutorial course.

Also in **Omaha**, we have a new hit! It is weekly yoga classes that are offered free to all attorneys and staff. These classes are tailored for beginners and led by **Daphne Aronson**. What has this got to do with diversity initiative? Well, one of the goals of diversity initiative is gaining new perspectives and broadening our awareness and appreciation of who we are and who we can be, both individually and collectively. We are offering yoga, not just to be hip, but as one of many ways we acknowledge the intricacies of our identity and potential.